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Now the little rogue is satisfied with kicking up his legs in a great fashion, and whenever he puts his clumsy, little fingers to his pug nose he forgets even to twist them into an artistic shell form — with which he delighted the courtisanes of former times — for to behave like a *gamin* in the salon was always his favorite pastime. Rococo now has become meaningless, extravagant, inorganic, qualities which wise men have unjustly attributed to it in its prime.

Glorious century, much vaunted and lavishly admired century, as the newspapers do not fail to impress on us after certain events, or when the editor is hard up for a column or two! Vain, glorious generation that can pass no mirror, without bursting out into a delirium of vanity! Blessed age of inventions and progress! We imagine that we are living in a revolutionary age and make great fuss over all the advantages and accomplishments of the present. And yet — deny it who can — we have not yet outgrown the Rococo.

It is true, railroads have been built, and kings have been beheaded, and we are using another light, but these are merely externalities of little importance. The arts of riding and hunting have been neglected, we prefer to read Sunday papers now and our eyes have grown weak in consequence. But all this does not touch the mainspring of life.

Intimate life has remained the same, and, if it be true that the *milieu* in which we move forms our characters and mentality, it was entirely superfluous for our grandfathers to cut off their pigtails, as the same pigtails have grown with great fertility into the inner man, for our "style" is the Rococo, and a hopelessly bad Rococo at that.

Rococo, nothing but Rococo, above and below, on all sides, every object from the cheap fabrications of factories to works of art, everything bears the stamp of Rococo.

We are a sad generation, deserving unlimited pity. The same is happening to us every day. The Old we have buried irrevocably and irretrievably, but to replace it by the New, for which our soul is yearning, which haunts our restless dreams is still far distant, and we cannot even see it in vague outlines. So we possess neither the past nor the future, and are altogether too melancholy, mourning for both. We have learnt much, and could dare everything, yet can accomplish nothing.

The whole wealth of the past is spread before us, a boundless treasure, heaped up by millenniums, but we do not enjoy it. And because we cannot enjoy it, we gossip about it, flirt with it, laugh over it until better times arrive. This is Rococo. And

this Rococo reigns everywhere in science, art and life. It is the malady of the century.

### ON AMERICAN LITERATURE.

I had a strange dream, both ridiculous and painful. The scene was: an immense battlefield on soft, sloping hills. There I lay with pierced breast in a pool of my own blood, very near the demolished walls of the fortification we had stormed, my face hidden in the dilapidated flag, my hands clutching frantically its broken shaft. And all around me good comrades were lying, some near, and others farther, with contorted muscles, pain-distorted faces and death rattling in their throats, many Frenchmen, Scandinavians, Russians and also a few solitary Americans. (At my right lay, horribly mutilated, Edgar Poe, who died at the very onset of the battle. On the side of my heart, at some distance however, gasped Amelie Rives, passing from the quick to the dead.)

Every face was pale with approaching death; and yet our unendurable pain was mixed with joy, and our dying lips tried to smile, and the atmosphere was filled with the music of triumphal marches.

Then strong, healthy, well-built youths came from the height, with noble gestures and heroic mien. They were followed by girls, I do not remember how they were dressed, I believe they were naked, or at least artistically draped, with flowers in the voluptuous tide of their hair, and their laughter sounded like music in the balmy atmosphere. And all nature, all created things bowed low to humanity, because it possessed art.

This is why we must die so painfully, and though it hurts, it is all well. And this is why we try to smile so blissfully, though we are all pale, dying creatures; for art is liberty, and happiness, and peace.

We possess nothing of that future art except the longing for it. We have never seen its sun-suffused beauty, except in a confused dream of desire. We only know from the dissatisfaction in our souls, that it will come after us to a happier generation.

For them we acquire it, we sacrifice ourselves that they may live and enjoy. Not a very pleasant fate, perhaps, nevertheless, our grandchildren will admire, even envy us for it. And gratefully, full of admiration and reverence they will erect monuments on loud, public places, and in quiet, lonesome hearths, to all the brave fallen ones, those many Frenchmen, Scandinavians, Russians and the few solitary Americans.

Very few Americans, heart rendingly few Americans. Why is it that this nation which is so great in other things has lately lost all connection with its spiritual development?

I read a very stupid hand book lately on American literature, by a former friend of mine, professor — of the — University, containing, however, a good enumeration of contemporary authors, and I learned to my bitter sorrow how very few authors we really possess.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, the last remnant of a powerful past, but where is the beginning of a future which is worthy to succeed this past?

Who else?

One critic, E. C. Stedman, who, though a trifle pedantic, writes by far too little. One virtuoso, who might have been known as a great critic if he had chosen to become one, and not exposed himself to the degrading influence of newspaper scribbling: Nym Crinkle.

One who is always a pleasant rhymster, and one who is at times a poet: Frank Dempster Sherman and T. B. Aldrich, and one who might have developed into a poetess, Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox—the rest, I fear are merely poetasters, except Eugene Field, the most pleasant, healthy, if not foremost humorist of the day. (Not a wilderness of Bill Nyes and Whitcomb Rileys would I give for one Eugene Field.)

And now Melpomene and Thalia let flow your tears! For at each new piece that issues from the pen of Bronson Howard, Thomas, Belasco, Merrington, etc., I ask myself, astonished and helpless, "How is it, how is it that with such little talent, they have so much success?" I would recommend Clyde Fitch, if I could only guarantee him to be original.

Then Bret Harte, Cable, Fawcett, Hawthorne, Jr., clever novelists, who have done good work, but who now invariably repeat themselves; Edgar Saltus, our Théophile Gauthier, only that he is too French in form and too much Schopenhauer in idea; Marion Crawford, who is always worth reading, and Bellamy, who before he became a Nationalist, wrote the best novels of them all, and besides a few like Watson Howe, Keenan, Margaret Deland, Mary Wilkins, Amelie Rives (endeavoring to be erotic), etc., who may yet become novelists, but the only reliable one after all is Mary Wilkins. Space forbids us to do justice to the Ben Hur, Fauntleroy, Mr. Barnes and Boston Transcript literature.

And sometimes I have deeply pondered by myself whether the history of American literature will

not allow itself the bad joke of redeeming its present misery by the at all events erotic works of the author of "Christ," which would be a wicked ruse indeed.

And last—do not smile—Howells, James, Eggleston; and Hoyt, and the Old Homestead dramatists, our naturalists, who are, undoubtedly, indisputably, forerunners of the great novel and the great drama America needs.

The list is short, and I fear it is complete. It is not easy to make a mistake in adding contemporary literary efforts, for, though there are many figures, they are mostly zeroes.

CRITIC FIN DE SIECLE.

THOMAS W. DEWING.

A genuine American painter, one of our masters! During my recent visits to artists' studios, I asked a dozen or more of our prominent painters, belonging to the most antagonistic schools, whom they considered the best artists of America; their lists always varied entirely, but strange to say, Dewing was invariably mentioned.

I, for my part, can never look at a picture of Dewing's without being deeply moved. His instinct of beauty, poetic expression and mystic grace satisfy my desire to forget every-day life completely.

His pictures leave an after-glow, and that is a decided merit. In this world with its thousands of interests a man's works must be quite powerful in order to become so important to us as to form a part, however small it may be, of our intellectual life.

Dewing's pictures have a certain something that reminds me of a rare piece of furniture which has been beautified by a coating of *vernis Martin*.

I know nothing in painting which possesses such an exquisite (intellectual) flavor for me as the browns of Richardson or the greyish greens of Theophile Reichardt. It is a most peculiar flavor. I am quite a connoisseur of wines, let me see if I can fix it. It is some rare brand. It is neither Chateau d'Yquem nor Tokay, nor Lachrimae Christi, nor Veuve Clicquot. Now I have it. It is, perhaps, like a cup of Imperial Japanese tea, at about twenty dollars a pound, of mild florescence, delicious in taste, and yet with some strength, by no means effeminate.

The pictures of Dewing are devoted to a certain type of human beings, to represent beautiful ladies, mostly mature women of thirty, is their sole aim.